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minority in the General Assembly quite natural, when "declaring their hearty belief in a love for the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and their entire loyalty to the principles of the Presbyterian Church, they desire respectfully to record their solemn protest against the verdict and judgment of suspension, and the proceedings leading to the verdict, in the case against the Rev. Charles A. Briggs, D. D., in the General Assembly of 1893." Yes, if the right to private interpretation exists in the Presbyterian Church, and if words bear with them the meaning which they are intended to convey, the Briggs trial was a farce and the sentence passed upon the man a piece of iniquity.

These remarks concerning the free interpretation of the Bible and the case of Dr. Briggs have been made merely for the sake of argument; for a Roman Catholic believes and maintains that the system of individual interpretation of the divine word, with all its intrinsic absurdities, practical difficulties and baleful consequences, cannot be adopted or advocated by any man of upright judgment, and that it can, consequently, never have been handed down or sanctioned by the Founder of Christianity. Just as the safe keeping of the Holy Scriptures has been intrusted by Christ to His church, so must there be in that same church of His an infallible means to unravel all intricacies and to illustrate all sayings of recon-dite significance contained in those sacred books. That means is the teaching as well as governing authority set up in the church by its Founder. The very conclusions whereto we should be forcibly led by the contrary doctrine is sufficient proof that the Catholic belief in this regard is the only one deserving of respect and support. For who shall give to every man the time, the acumen, the knowledge required to arrive at the true meaning of certain difficult passages of the Holy Scriptures? Who shall tell a man that his interpretation of this or that text is the true one? And if, as in the case of Dr. Briggs, a conflict arise between two or more persons attributing different senses to some biblical expression, who shall decide the question? The local Presbytery or the General Assembly? But how could they thus tamper with the right to private interpretation vested in each of the wrangling parties? It is evident, therefore, that an absolute, supreme teaching authority must have been deputed by Christ to His church, that to this authority must be referred all difficulties met with in the interpretation of the sacred text, and that all the members of the church must consider the decision arrived at by that same authority as final and binding. Such is the Catholic belief, and we leave it for any sensible reader to say whether or not it is the only reasonable one. Authority in these matters of such serious import is so obviously necessary that all in practice recognize it and follow its dictates. The child, whether reared in the Catholic faith or not, receives the interpretation given him by his parents, and, later on, the man follows the teachings of his pastor. Why? Because this is for all the readiest, most natural and, generally speaking, the only practicable way of learning and understanding the Holy Scriptures.

L. A. NOLIN, O. M. I., LL. D.

#### NEEDED PRISON REFORMS.

OUR laws punish a man who does not support his family, by shutting him up and confiscating his earnings. What an amazing absurdity! But it is little more so than the persistence with which we cling to the prison systems of past centuries. Compulsory labor for the State is a species of slavery. It inevitably makes bad men worse. The convict's bitterness is

intensified by the knowledge that while he is earning money for the State, which needs nothing, his family is starving. Every man toiling for those he loves is ennobled by his labor. If this was the only argument in favor of the State paying the convict's wages to his family, it would be sufficient to justify such a law.

The State should pay to the families or dependent relatives of its convicts the same wages that similar labor costs private parties. Where there are no dependent relatives the wages should be paid partly to the poor fund of the county which paid the cost of conviction and partly to the convict at his discharge. The suffering a criminal endures from the loss of his liberty and remorse for his sin is a necessary part of his penalty. Not so the greater pain he feels on account of the destitution of his family, left without means of support on account of his confinement.

A criminal should never be punished in a spirit of retaliation, or beyond what is necessary for the protection of society. Every convict has all the rights ever his, except those taken away by sentence of the court, and those which, if allowed him, would render the execution of his sentence impossible. The law of Moses put the wife and children to death with the capital criminal. We think this was barbarous. What shall be said of our treatment of such? We confiscate the wages of the bread-winner of the family, and then with scornful hand dole out a bare subsistence to those we have robbed of their all. By such injustice we cause his children to hate society and become criminals for revenge.

Many men are moved by an economic argument who are indifferent to a moral one. Let these consider the expense of our present system. In a vast majority of cases the families of convicts are left destitute and become a public charge. It is probable that 90 per cent. of all the crimes for which men are sent to prison are traceable to alcoholism. It seems as if all must agree that such criminals should be placed in a reformatory and made to support their families by their labor. And that they should be released upon parole only, and returned as often as they get drunk or squander their wages upon drink. What a saving to taxpayers such a law would prove!

In estimating the cost of our prisons, it would be a gross mistake to only reckon the amount of money used. If taxes were the only consideration, it would be cheaper to support all convicts in idleness than to place them in competition with free labor. Labor is the true wealth of the State. For the State to pay the expenses of its prisons with labor is to pay them with the most valuable thing she possesses. To deprive citizens of the opportunity to labor by State competition is suicide. Suppose a State had a sufficient number of convicts to perform all the labor within her borders, what kind of a government would it be? It would be a community of a few despotic aristocrats supported and enriched by gangs of chained slaves. Every invoice of goods manufactured by convicts and sold by the State deprives free labor of the opportunity of being employed long enough to perform that labor, and by competition it lowers the wages of those who are employed.

Even from a worldly standpoint, life, reason and morality are above the price of gold. God speed the day when a rich and powerful State shall no longer be guilty of the injustice and barbarity of compelling helpless women and innocent children to suffer, not for a father's crime, for that is unavoidable, but for the punishment of his crime.

F. C. ELDRED.